



Marketing On A Minuscule Budget

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**Destination
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MARKETING ON A MINUSCULE BUDGET

NOTE: This handout is only the text version of the workshop. The session will include dozens of photos, video clips, case histories, and examples of how communities and businesses have successfully marketed themselves with only a minuscule budget.

Your marketing efforts do NOT need to be expensive, but they WILL require time. Here are ten things you can do to reduce your marketing costs while increasing sales:

1) Use public relations as your primary marketing tool

- a. You will see \$3 in “earned media” for every dollar spent on PR.
- b. Articles are read three times more frequently than ads.
- c. Articles have more credibility: someone else is tooting your horn. In ads, you’re tooting your own horn.
- d. You build your brand through PR. Advertising is used to maintain your position.
- e. Make sure your community is on the news; weather reports put you on the map. More powerful than you may think. Creates TOMA.
- f. Be creative to make yourself newsworthy. A little dose of “nuts” can go a long way. Example: a 70’ lava lamp in Soap Lake, WA; Mike the Headless Chicken in Fruita, CO.

2) Cater to niche groups

- a. They are hungry for places to go, things to do specific to their members.
- b. Get books that list clubs and organizations.
- c. Get copies of their newsletters.
- d. Make sure there’s a fit.
- e. You provide the article(s) and the photography.
 - i. Nothing but professional digital scans (300 dpi, 30 MB+).
 - ii. Use Word documents, times font, double spaced.
 - iii. Give them two versions: long and short. Call first.
- f. Look for help from professional photographers, writers.
- g. Sell to niche groups for both publicity and events.
- h. Attend their trade shows and events. Provide speakers in exchange for a trade show booth or other types of participation. If you’re not the speaker, find someone who is part of the niche and has something to offer.
- i. Tap into locals to bring peers to the table (or community).

3) With your PR effort: Make it easy for them to promote you

- a. Create a press kit.
- b. Develop a photo library.
- c. Write and submit stories.
- d. Send to specific publications.
- e. Call them. Follow up is absolutely critical.
- f. Articles MUST have relevance to their readers.

- g. Make sure you provide photography.
- h. Provide graphics, articles, etc. on CD ROM.
- i. Offer “first rights.”
- j. Provide resource information.
- k. Call and get a “media kit” with “editorial calendar.”
- l. Do your homework first.
- m. Don’t send press releases to radio stations.
 - i. Write 15 second, 20 second, 30 second PSA’s.
 - ii. Press releases need to be newsworthy. Period. Most end up in the trash. Offer to submit the article, photography, etc. Make sure you are submitting a topic per the editorial calendar.

4) With your PR effort: Get a publicity resource kit (Bacon’s)

- a. Find out who the travel writers are for publications in your primary and secondary market areas.
- b. Send them an e-mail, letter, or fax. Then call them to follow up
 - i. Offer free meals, accommodations (some may not take them, others will).
- c. Don’t just go to travel publications: look at your business journals.
- d. Talk to medical, legal, accounting, architects, etc. See what publications they read. Get copies. Are there “leisure time” columns or articles.

5) Create marketing partnerships

- a. This includes “Activities Guides” – public/private partnerships.
- b. Develop and advertise for Statement of Qualifications for:
 - i. Professional photography
 - ii. Graphic design services
 - iii. Public/media relations services
 - iv. Printing services
 - v. Website hosting, development, maintenance services
- c. Create buying and marketing co-ops.
- d. If you buy advertising: make sure you get publicity as part of the package. Rule of thumb for glossy publications: 50% (Buy a half page, get a half page – or more - in editorial coverage).
- e. Create video production partners – put videos on-line, on CD, on DVD.

6) Develop sponsorship opportunities

- a. This includes events and facilities.
- b. Call the “Promotions Director” at radio stations.
 - i. Collect giveaways and packages from local merchants.
- c. Find out what charities are supported by certain newscasters.
 - i. Host their events in exchange for publicity.
- d. Don’t be afraid to ask!
- e. Look for local television opportunities, cross-marketing.

7) Find your niche and promote it like crazy

- a. Find out what sets you apart or makes you worth a special trip.
- b. Find every group, club, or organization that you appeal to.
- c. Develop packages for them.
- d. Repetition gets results, repetition gets results – don’t use the

shotgun approach. Create “Top of Mind Awareness.”

8) Send materials to guide books and travel directories

- a. Spend time at the bookstore: travel guides, best places to kiss, etc.
 - i. Write to the authors.
 - ii. Enhance what AAA Tour Books say about you.

9) Use the internet to your full advantage

- a. Make sure your website is good enough to close the sale.
- b. All your brochures and marketing materials should be available on-line.
 - i. PDF format
- c. Create a “permission marketing” special-deals and events newsletter.
- d. Create an on-line “press room.”
- e. Purchase listings on Google and Yahoo! search engines.

10) Use universities and colleges

- a. Even high schools have a lot to offer in the way of talent.
- b. Have them do media research, write articles, provide photography.
- c. Many professors believe in real-life, hands-on assignments or class or team projects.

In a nutshell: To be successful, you MUST shift your focus

- d. Get away from events and “overhead” and become a PR agency.
- e. Dedicate a full-time effort to this process and you’ll see huge successes.
- f. This is about “sales” – not just sending out PSA’s and press releases
- g. It requires time on the phone.
- h. Be patient – this effort takes time. It’s like “pushing a car.”
- i. Do what you’ve been hired to do: SELL.
- j. There is NOTHING WRONG with advertising – it can support your efforts, and can leverage your PR efforts.

Examples:

- Ocean Shores, WA co-op advertising: \$125,000 total annual budget. With co-op participation: \$310,000 spent. Result: Three times the state’s average increase in lodging revenues. Rank: #11 of 277 cities in terms of lodging revenues. Population: 3,500. Annual retail sales and services: \$85 million.
- Ocean Shores, WA tourism project recruitment program. First ten years: \$20,000 a year spent running ads. No results. Hired a “sales effort:” cost: \$85,000 a year for three years. Result: \$150 million in new tourism projects. The city is seeing a 600% annual cash return on that investment. Amount spent on advertising during those three years: \$60 total.
- Battle Mountain, Nevada. Washington Post honors: “The Armpit of America.” Turning lemons into lemonade: Billboards: “Judge for yourself.” Sponsorship: Irish Spring, \$150,000 for the annual Festival of the Pit, or The Armpit Festival. Earned media: \$480,000 over two years.

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Pushing a Car

Have you ever had to push a car? Using your back and your legs and every ounce of strength you can summon, you gasp and strain and make faces as the doubt flickers through your mind: "I'm not sure I can do this." Then the car moves its first inch and you find strength you never knew you had. The second inch is slightly easier, but now you're thinking, "I'm not sure I can last." By the time you've moved it a yard, all doubts have fled. "Of course I can do this. I can do anything." Soon you're pushing just hard enough to keep the car rolling as you trot along behind it, basking in the applause of an imaginary crowd.

Launching a marketing effort is exactly like pushing a car.

I believe there are laws of the universe that cannot be cheated and that these laws apply in every area of our lives. One of these is the law of inertia. My dictionary defines inertia as "the tendency of all objects and matter in the universe to stay still if still, or, if moving, to go on moving in the same direction."

Your car doesn't begin to roll the moment you begin to push, and it doesn't stop rolling the moment you quit. The inertia that is your enemy at first becomes your ally in the end. Momentum is a wonderful thing, isn't it? But it never comes cheaply.

Likewise, marketing doesn't begin to work as quickly as you would like, but it also doesn't quit working until long after it has been abandoned. (Assuming, of course, that you ever got it rolling at all.)

So where are you now? Are you trotting along behind the car, providing the nudge it needs to keep rolling, or are you still pushing with all your strength in an attempt to pick up speed?

If ever you find yourself straining and doubting, call a sales professional. They're out there waiting for the chance to help you push that car.

Reprint from The Wizard of Ads, by Roy H. Williams